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# MISTRESS HASELWODE.

# MISTRESS HASELWODE,

## A TALE OF THE REFORMATION OAK.

A NOVEL IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

F. H. MOORE.

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# MISTRESS HASELWODE.

## CHAPTER I.

IT was May-day in the old town of Windham — named by its Saxon founders "the pleasant village on a mount"—and a right gay and merry day the Windham folks clearly meant to make of it.

For the houses of the burghers in the chief streets were decked out with banners of varied coloured stuffs drooping from the lattices, and with festoons of green leaves, hung with garlands, stretching across the narrow road.

The peasants' cots, too, in the bye-lanes leading off the bettermost streets were smartly tricked with boughs, and wreaths of golden buttercups and silvery daisies, with here and there a bunch of bright blue-bells tied to the end of a pole projecting from the little dormers.

Nor had the old Abbey Church of S. Mary the Virgin been forgotten, but was vested in its annual May-day garb; there, from its great west tower floated lazily in the breeze the flag of merrie England. Many such days that church had witnessed, as it stood with its lines of bold-capped columns, and rounded arches of Norman type, zigzagged and tooth-moulded by the cunning hands of artificers, directed by the skilful monks, who lived in the adjacent Priory. Here, fraternity after fraternity had enjoyed undisturbed possession from the time of Prior Daubeney in the days of

the 1st Henry, and since till the 8th, who had turned them adrift and taken fast hold of their lands, but a few years before our story opens.

Beneath that Church—the monument of their art—rested in peace the silent dust of good Daubeney and many another prior, who had in turn served before its altars and with his monks expended the revenues in dispensing hospitality and charity to all needy comers.

Although the day had not long dawned, all the town was stirring; for in those times folks went early to bed, and early rose, either for work or pleasure. It was, however, quite evident that but little work was to be done on this day, for already at their cottage doors stood the comely housewives, or their sturdy spouses, peeping forth to see what the morning betokened.

And, in truth, it was an enlivening pros-

pect for that holiday which greeted their eager gaze. The sun had risen brightly, and was shedding his gilding beams on the moss-grown, thatched roofs and trim gardens of the cottages; on the flint-dressed walls, gurgoyled cornices, and crockets of the Church; and on the peaked gables, mullioned casements, steep red-tiled roofs, and carved oaken beams of the well-to-do burghers' dwellings; making the tiny lattice lights twinkle, diamond-like, with his glinting brightness in the soft grey of this May morn.

The neighbouring meadows and gardens, too, sent forth the sweet essences of the white-flecked bushes, and of the early flowers, which, wafted by the gentle wind, impregnated the air with delicious sweetness; while the warbling notes of thrushes and song birds, tickled the ears with melody.

Ah! May-day of old, with all thy merry light-hearted frolics, and all thy rustic joys and sorrows; how many a long year has since rolled by and buried these memories deep in oblivious shade! Yet, let the misty veil of time be for once uplifted, and that May-day frolic live again for a little space!

Soon the clang of the bells sounding forth from the church tower—those evangelist bells, dedicated long since when blessed by good Prior Daubeney—summoned from their homes the expectant revellers, who, coming out of their open doors, mingle together and exchange morning greetings as they wend their way towards the well-known Town green, where the May-pole will presently be reared.

Youths and damsels, gammers and gaffers, all are making holiday, with even the old grandsires, who, trudging on by the help of

their stout ashen sticks, recall to their accompanying dames in quavering tones that May-day of theirs long gone by, when first love taught them, while but lad and lass, its sweet lesson.

And a picturesque assemblage, too, are they all in their festal garments. Women and girls wearing their best petticoats of gay-coloured stuffs, with neat white kerchers pinned on their heads, and puffed linen sleeves fastened at the wrist by a band, intermingle with the men and boys in their round slop, breeches, cloth jerkins, white stockings, square-toed shoes, and flat caps of woven wool, which they carry jauntily on the side of their closely cropped heads.

Each seemed joyous, as was Nature herself; and so this May morn broke.

Windham Green was a large space of common land, lying pleasantly just without the little town, and through it ran a

road leading to the city of Norwich, distant some nine miles or so.

Along this road might even now be seen, at this early hour, many lissom foot passengers trudging over from the city, and from Silfield, Wattlefield, Downham, and other adjacent townships. For Windham May-day, with Windham play, was the great festival of all that country side, and the peasant lads, and bouncing lasses, with the sober burghers, their wives, daughters, and prentices all made holiday, and donned their festive dress to join in the yearly sports.

Here and there, too, some stalwart yeoman on his trotting nag, with his spouse perched up on her pillion, mingled with the pedestrians.

About the taverns hissing ostlers were already busy stabling horses, while the riders were refreshing their thirsty souls

with the good ale of the house; and lively serving wenches were laying out solid food in the shape of buttocks of beef, haunches of mutton, chines, fat capons, large wheaten loaves, and saffron-tinted cheeses in readiness for the mid-day meal, when the exhausted pleasure seekers would be crowding into the neatly sanded parlours of the taverns.

At the sign of the "Falcon," in the Sheep Market, there was more bustle than at any other of the hostels; and it would appear to an observer that the better sort were putting up there, those who came being mostly well horsed, and some attended by their serving men. The visitors who had as yet arrived were gathered together in the long, low-ceilinged room of the Inn, which was used only on these special occasions, when an unusually large party required accommodation, and were holding whispered conver-

sation one with another on some topic of an apparently engrossing character. They were presently joined by a pleasant-looking young fellow, well built, and with Saxon features, blonde hair, and moustache; who, glancing round the group of guests, doffed his cap, and bowed an acknowledgment to their recognition. Then one of them, whose tonsure, on the removal of his cap, betrayed him to be a priest of the unreformed faith, in spite of the disguise of his dress—for these now scarce dare show their faces abroad, being dispossessed of their cures, and many of them hidden away in the houses of the nobility and gentry, who secretly adhered to their former principles—came forward saying,—

"Welcome as May flowers, Master Flowerdew and may the day be indeed far distant, when one of thy staunch stock shall not meet with hearty good will from

all true sons of holy church. Thou hast ridden hard, so methinks 'twere well to taste good Stubb's tap, ere we broach business, for talking is but thirsty work."

"True, father," replied Flowerdew, "a thirsty soul hath no ears; and, by my faith, I know of none so good refresher for serious talk as sound malt liquor, wherefore, I'll bid mine host draw a stoup. Hey! Master Stubbs, come, let us taste this homebrewed, which, to judge by thine own comely paunch, hath no scant measure of malt, for its wholesome strength hath surely advantaged thee."

Host Stubbs, who was in all conscience a fat and pursy soul, and withal a good natured, departed puffing and blowing on his journey to the cellar, amid the laughter of the company; for the old man waddled not unlike his porkers, which were grunt-

ing unmusically in their snug lodging outside the parlour window.

While Host Stubbs is gone for the ale, we will glance at the rest of the company gathered together in the tavern parlour, to the number of some twenty or thirty.

Their master spirit was evidently the priest, whose restless black eyes, thin cut lips, and rapid utterance, discovered a determined and energetic temperament. In truth, the memory of recent wrongs, which he and his brethren had sustained, when the rude servants of the law, at Cromwell's bidding, had turned them forth from their retreat, was ever present to Michael Sykes, ex-prior of Bromeholme; and this had roused all the latent fire and energy of his nature, which before the monotonous routine of his daily life had suppressed;

till now, the sole aim of his active mind was directed towards the recovery of the power and possessions lost by his Church. Near him stood a young man some two and twenty years of age, or so, dressed in the rich fashion of men of quality, in a doublet and hose of dark claret colour hemmed with gold, and with an embroidered waist belt, from which hung his blade in a bright steel scabbard. With a rakish mien, he bore about his countenance, which was handsome, albeit somewhat delicate-featured for a man, the premature lines of self-indulgence. His eyes were black, as was his hair, which he wore according to the style of the day, closely trimmed under a plumed cap. This was Hubert de Burgh, whose father, the Lord de Burgh, had risked his head and estate rather than yield up his faith. To judge, however, by the demeanour of the young De Burgh, he would be made of other

metal than his sire; since his frequent yawns, and restless glances often cast at the window, betrayed that he was hankering after the amusement to be gained from the May-day sports, rather than any matter of serious discussion.

There were also some half-a-dozen others, richly clad, of the degree of gentry, stern and earnest-looking, to whom De Burgh afforded a great contrast. The remaining guests were mainly country yeomen of good substance; but mixed up with them were a few others of no defined station, loose and dissolute in appearance, who seemed to be half gallant, half cut-purse—mere waiters on fortune—and were singularly unlike the rest. All carried side-arms.

Host Stubbs soon re-entered with his wife Bridget, carrying a large black-jack filled with ale, and also smaller flagons, into which the buxom hostess poured the

frothy liquor, and with smirking face handed it round to the guests.

The drink being tossed off, Flowerdew turned to the priest, saying—

"And now that we have washed the dust from out our throats, I pr'ythee tell us, father, how your plans be cast for this day's hurle."

"Right, my son," answered Sykes, "I will enlighten ye forthwith on the course we have mapped out, as suited best in our poor judgment to advantage Holy Church, and to uproot these broad-blown time-servers, who now lie a-clovered in our pastures; ay, and not content, would yet despoil us of the sorry remnant sinful Harry—whom may God reward—hath left us. Is not the memory of the brutal deeds wrought by him alive within us, sirs? Or, have we forgot how, when Sir Ralph Warren was Mayor, the holy Abbot of Fountans, with

the Priors of Gisburg and Bridlington, the learned Doctor Peckering, and Adam Sodbury, Abbot of Jarvis, with many a valiant knight, were hanged, headed and quartered on Tyburn Hill; because, forsooth, they would not desert their church at sensuous Harry's will? But," continued he, waxing warm, "soon shall Cranmer and his strifeful crew feel the hand of a loftier King than puny Edward, whose mother sank to death in his childbed on St. Crispin's eve; and on whose boyish brow King Death hath already set his mark, if all be true that meets the ear—too soon ripe, soon rotten!—but enough; now, gentle sirs, list ye to our plan. When next we meet on yon green, 'twill then be the time for daring acts; and to the guiding of such, we poor priests do look to your bold arms, sharp swords, and ready courage; and remember —success doth ever tread the footsteps of

the bold. Mayhap ye know that even now the Devonshire men, led by that worthy Captain, Sir Humfrey Arundel, have arisen in defence of their ancient Church's rights, and by a trusty messenger I do hear that they be sate down before Exeter, whence they will not budge till the city be yielded up, I'll warrant you. While the men of Buckingham and Oxford have aroused from their torpor, and begun to bestir them; four thousand men, who will not blench. Shall then, we Norfolk men, be deedless with so earnest a bodement of success?"

Murmurs of approval met the priest's appeal, and he went on—"It hath been fixed to act the play of the Scriveners, which depicteth the miracle of Christ's appearance to holy Peter, James and John, and the faithless Thomas—See, here be the very men who will enact," pointing to four debonair looking fellows, whose appearance

easily showed them to be of the race of stage players, "a broad piece or two hath secured their good service in getting this play chosen, for actors are scarce in these parts, and they did by favour of mine hire protest to Master Bailiff, that no other play could they enact. Come forward, Harry Killigrew, Bob Dighton, Dick Cockbill, and Jack Jeffcoat, and speak to this goodly company for yourselves."

In response to the priest's invitation, Killigrew, as spokesman, stepped forward, and bowing with tragedy grace, and no lack of assurance, to the guests, said:—

"How think ye, fair sirs, shall we play our parts? I'faith, methinks the Arch pastor, Master Cranmer himself, will scarce approve our playing, or will own us sheep of his flock, rank Protestants though we be; for he holdeth these Scripture enactments but as Popish mumming, and had

he gleaned a grain of knowledge as to the miracle acting—why, he would have forbid the game. I befear me then we poor actors are but on the road to jail, when our procedure reacheth his ears, an ye prevail not in this business. Yet, what reck we," added he, singing a snatch with a nasal twang—

> "We're for him who pays us quick,
> Protestant, or Catholic—"

"So, your worships, were we fain to take this reverend father's palm; when he, hearing we were chose to play at the May acting, did persuade us to try the Scrivener's piece, and here we be at your service."

"Here, too," said the priest, "is Will Lively, who hath played in the Globe afore Wanton Harry and his Court, he will enact the chiefest part."

"Trust me," spake up Will, "for a right proper portraiture; and further, credit me,

the Globe company will tell ye how Will Lively can play his part, be it Pope or Devil, King or Beggar, Saint or Sinner, Priest or Preacher, Knave or Fool, Gentle or Churl."

Sykes frowned at Will's familiar boldness of speech, but retained command over his well-trained temper; and muttering to himself, "One catcheth more flies with honey than with vinegar," replied jestingly to the perky play actor, "Well, well, Master Will, see that thou makest good thy boast, else wilt be held but a cavtel chatterbox."

Then turning to the company, "So far, good friends, ye see our plan; yet must I further advise ye of the part which I have pledged me to bear in the coming hurle. First am I to be bookholder in the play, so shall I keep them to the mark; then 'twill be mine, by special

agreement with them, to come forth on the stage, when I purpose holding such speech as shall stir up the deep-set passions of the people, which in all honest truth do now but slumber, but, when they have drunk them chokeful of ale, trust me, these Norfolk country folk, and smerky 'prentice lads, will be ready for any devilment—when the belly's full the music goeth the better—so I hope to fan the sparks, which deep-mouthed Will must kindle, like waving stammel cloth before a herd of cattle, to such a flame as shall singe that arch heretic Cranmer, spite his seeming power, and squelsh him with his co-plotters in one ruin. But now must we part till noon, when all should keep tryst on the Green, and wait a fitting moment for the signal—'twixt now and then much yet lieth before me—some score or so trusty helpers are awaiting speech without, and I may no

longer delay — Farewell, then, for the nonce."

With which the priest left the room, accompanied by a small number of the party; and he, whom we know as Flowerdew, turned to the others, saying:—

"By the mass, good sirs, methinks our holy father hath laid his train with some discernment, I trust naught may hap to mar his plans; yet to waste more of this bright May sun, would be a grievous sin, so I'll e'en go too awhile, and watch the lissom rustics at their games."

## CHAPTER II.

"More matter for a May morning."—
TWELFTH NIGHT.

MASTER FLOWERDEW, on leaving the rest of the company at the Falcon to discuss Host Stubbs' ale and their plans, turned down the Sheep Market, and made his way through the gathering crush towards the Green. Among the crowd he saw, here and there, some whose appearance of dare-devil carelessness betokened they were there for no good purpose; and once he caught a glimpse of the Priest, guised by a long cloak, in an animated talk with one of these gallants, by which he concluded they formed a part

of the little band hired by him to lead the day's racket. But his quick eye observed also that these gentry were not regarded with much favour by the country folk, for many of the rustic youths seemed disposed to resent the leering glances cast on their modest sweethearts by these hardened worldlings. All this Flowerdew noting, soliloquised—" I much befear me the good Priest's ardour hath o'er stepped the bounds of his judgment, for scarce ever saw I more unpromising comrades than these ill-favoured curs."

Turning the corner of the street, Flowerdew found himself on the verge of the crowd gathered on the Green, by this time swollen with visitors from Dereham, Hingham, Attleburgh, and other towns within reach, and a rare medley, too, it was. Portly burghers and their wives walked along with stately carriage as they received

respectful salutes from their prentices and menials; the worthy traders being easily distinguished from the yeomen and country-folks by the extra spruceness of their attire. Here and there also strutted some young gentle, casting his killing glances at the smiling maidens.

Among them all went one on whom eyes of disfavour were turned by many a fellow burgher, and many a gentle; which looks were as boldly returned by the stout recipient; for Master Robert Ket, the tanner, of Windham, was both rich and thriving, and had, too, by many a bold act proved his unscrupulous daring; holding sway among the prentices and the lower sort, although an object of special dislike to the surrounding lords of the soil, on whose manorial rights he had ere this often rudely trespassed. Moreover, screened by the jealousy of the municipal privileges which the

burghers allowed to all their freemen when claimed, whether or not they approved of the object of their protection, he had openly defied and braved his opponents. Not a few reprisals had, however, been effected by the gentry, for when Ket's fellows would, without leave or heed, venture into the enclosed lands and woods in pursuit of sport, or poach in the well-preserved ponds and meres for pike and carp, then a tussle would often ensue betwixt them and the varlets of the manor, resulting in broken pates and bloodshed, in which the former usually came off but second-best.

Master Ket, moreover, had of late presumed to hold forth among his fellows and the other folk on matters which keenly touched the sensitive pride of the hereditary gentry; and, although his views and theories were distasteful to the leading burghers, still his fiery oratory, albeit rough

and unlearned, had often stirred the lower sort, and would, doubtless, when next heard produce a like commotion.

By every gentle, and in particular by those of the old faith, was Master Robert Ket regarded, in spite of his substance, as an audacious meddler; for, ever since the first movement of the Reformation, had Ket thrust himself forward in these parts as a wholesale reformer, and rendered himself thoroughly obnoxious to all easy-going folks, and to those round about, who had been reared in, and were deeply attached to the faith of their ancestors.

He had also taken advantage of the recent anti-papal crusade to persecute all whom he fell foul of, inciting the prentices and his sympathisers to commit summary acts of violence regardless of law.

Robert Ket was a strongly-built, large-limbed man, with a countenance betraying

powerful and sensuous passions, and having a dogged look about him, as of a man obstinate and self-willed. With him walked William Ket, whose likeness to his brother shewed him to be a chip of the same block; but his features betokened the indecision of character of a man more calculated to follow than to lead.

As they went along, exchanging greetings with sundry of their acquaintance, they were presently joined by one, whose lengthened visage and sad-coloured garments unmistakeably marked him as a Preacher of the ultra-Protestant section of the unsettled Church.

"Give ye good day, my masters," exclaimed he, "are ye then bound for this May play? Ah!" sighed the good man, "I would that this land of ours were purged of all the remnant of these idolatrous vanities."

"Tut, tut, parson Whitehead," returned

Robert, "dost think thee, man, that youth and merriness will be tamed by all thy preaching? I tell thee nay, let them have their frolic. Marry, 'tis not so long since thyself played handball at Easter for tansy cakes. Be content, hast thou already drunk so deep of godliness that thou canst not stomach so small a draught of pleasure?"

"Peace, friend Robert," replied the parson, "nor taunt me with thy jests, which are but unseemly. I fear me that our recent preachments have not duly edified, and that thou art backsliding; else thou wouldst at least have joined me in making end of all this mumming, which is but one of Satan's devices to lure our children back to Romish wiles. Verily, I have oft bethought me, thou only didst join with us for thine own worldly ends, and not for the just cause of Heaven."

"Marry, then, if that be so, Master

Whitehead," cried Ket, "at least we may cry quits; for thou hast got a snug parson house, and some score acres of the Prior's glebe to boot."

The parson, in a heat, was about to reply, when their attention was distracted by the hurrahs of the crowd; and so Master Robert escaped further sermonising. The shouting heralded the approach of the pole; and groups of lads and maids appeared nearing the green, with in their midst some twenty meek-eyed oxen, festooned with flowers around their necks, and each with a nosegay tied to the tips of his horns, dragging a rough carriage, on which was the pole gaily painted in stripes of blue, red and white, and tricked out with many a branch of birch and fennel sprig, with may-boughs, garlands of flowers, and silken ribbons.

As the cavalcade was spied approaching, long and lusty cheers were raised, and kept

up till the oxen and their burden had reached the green; when the pole was removed from its rough and ready carriage, and a band of sturdy fellows began the task of rearing it, which was safely done, and in all its bravery the pole spread its trappings to the soft breeze.

Then the hustling crowd opened its ranks to allow a smart procession to pass, as there came on the scene the Lord and Lady of May. The lord, apparelled as Robin Hood, in a fanciful costume of green, led by the hand his "ladye faire," clad in a petticoat and kercher of simple white, as Maid Marian; while Little John with bow and arrows, and Friar Tuck in his monkish garb, with all the gay company of the Greenwood, followed, waiting on Robin and Marian. Many morris dancers gaily skipped about them, all in fantastic dress, and hung with dozens of little bells, which jingled as they

danced, and added to the excitement of the revellers, who greeted Robin and his maid with loud plaudits, modestly acknowledged by them, as they progressed towards the pole.

Then the attendant youths and maidens joining hands, danced and capered round them, again and again, keeping up the sport till downright faint with fatigue, when they in turn were succeeded by others, and so the simple folks began their May-day games.

Will Dickson, the Lord of May, was a fine sun-browned springal, and seemed mightily proud of his Lady, pretty Peggy Goodeve, daughter of Master Goodeve, a substantial yeoman, living at Downham, but a short way out of Windham, from whose woods and fields many of the green boughs which decorated the town had been cropped.

And, in sooth, Peggy was a fair sight to look on, when one of the ministering maidens, deputed by her fellows, stepped forward and placed on her brow the tinsel crown, which betokened her dignity.

Well, indeed, might Will feel proud as he gazed on the girl's sweet face all aglow with modest blushes; while many an envious sheep's-eye was cast, and many a cap was doffed to the blue-eyed May Queen. Both lord and queen seemed to satisfy their courtiers.

Among the crowd, and near to the pole, stood Mistress Margery Goodeve with her stalwart spouse.

"By my troth, goodman," cried the dame, with all a mother's pride, "Will Dickson doth not mislike our Peggy's comeliness—a prettier pair I scarce ever saw."

"Ah! wife," answered Goodeve, "that

be true, i'faith ; yet do I somehow feel but sad and sorehearted ; for last night I dreamt our lass lay asleep on the high bank, alongside the Kinecroft, befringed even as now, and in this selfsame white petticoat. Then when I looked, lo ! her bed was of sweet savoured violets,—and well thou knowest, that to dream of violets with one thou lovest well, on May eve betokeneth coming sorrow. Somehow I'm minded of evil Mayday, when the prentice hurle was in Cheap, all over Master Lincoln playing buckler on May eve against the Lord Cardinal's commands—you heard tell how he was strung up for his game ?"

"Tut, tut," answered Margery, cheerily, "why dost let such bawbling fancies fret thee, man ? Hath not good Cranmer said that dreams are but idle superstitions, Satan-sprung ? Rather, sweetheart, let us dream of our Maying, long since, when

thou wast Robin and I thy Marian—scarce then thought I the day would come when we should stand by and see our own lass trip it with her Robin. Lack a day! how quick the years do speed! But, see, here be the milkmaids!"

As she spoke, a group of bouncing maidens came along, hand in hand, forming a ring, in the centre of which skipped the chief dairymaid. This buxom wench bore on her head a marvellous erection of tankards and vessels, ornamented with green sprays; while those forming the ring were also decked out with flowers, and each carried a pail on her head with much dexterity. Two antiquated musicians marched along with them, and discoursed such lively strains as their instruments—which consisted of a species of fiddle, and a drounslate, or round narrow drum, suspended from the neck, and thrashed with

fierce vigour by the performer—could produce. Many, however, was the copper coin which the free-handed spectators dropped into the little box, at the soft entreaty of the coquettish dairymaid; and not a few silver pieces, too, for the crowd was leavened by a fair sprinkling of gallants, whose rich dress and plumed caps easily distinguished them. Among the concourse might be seen swarthy Egyptians, both men and women, the latter plying their art of palmistry among the credulous fair of their own sex, while the men picked up stray coins by sleight of hand, and pilfering from the simple folk.

Then, too, there were the purveyors of household gear, such as flax, bed linen, books, wax, and the like; hawkers, with their baskets filled with tempting wares, pewter mugs, wooden spoons and brooches, bawling out their prices; and sharp-

tongued pedlars, with their packs of sarcenet, woollen cloths of sundry colours, cauls, scarves, and kerchiefs, driving a brisk trade, and lessening the capacity of their packs by increasing the weight of their pouches, as the country yokels treated their gratified sweethearts to ribbons and fallals. On the outskirts of the fair little knots of lads and young men were testing their skill in games of trap ball, wrestling, leaping, and other manly sports.

So were the merry folks killing this May morning, all seeming bent on taking their fill of pleasure, till, the time for mid-day meal having come, Robin led the May Queen—preceded by the musicians, and followed by the tinkling morris dancers—to the sign of the Barley Mow, in the market, where was provided for their refection substantial food and flagons of sound home-brewed; for in these days modest

dames and tender lasses quaffed their ale, and vowed the liquor good.

After them the rest of the company also gradually dispersed, all to recruit their spirits, preparatory to the great event of the yearly May-day—the acting of the Dramatic Mystery.

Then, for the space of an hour, the streets rested in quiet, save where little parties of peasantry might be seen under the friendly shade of tree, or wall, eating their simple prog; and through the opened windows were heard the laughter and songs of the feasting revellers.

After awhile, the hum of voices and tramp of feet told that the people were turning out again, having satisfied their healthy appetites, and were hurrying down the narrow streets towards the Green; for by this the Church dial marked the noon, and at half after was to commence the great play acting.

## CHAPTER III.

"What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor,
An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause."
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

IN the centre of the green stood the stage—a platform of wood, supported at each corner by a square-cut post, which was continued up to form a bearer of the covered top. This roof was hipped to the centre, where was a stop finial springing out of a moulded base, and along the hips ran crockets, fashioned after the shape of oak leaves. The finial formed the bearer of a pennant, on which was delineated the picture of "Our Ladye"—the traditional patroness of May. Round the roof went a parapet carved into miniature battlements,

with, at each of the four corners, a pinnacled terminal. The whole was curtained in front with gaudy hangings of stuff, interwoven with gold threads, and was draped behind and below the platform with a plainer material to hide the rough wooden planking. On the centre of the curtain was an emblematic device—a cross and Jacob's ladder, grouped together, forming the chief feature. Near the stage stood a couple of trumpeters, whose especial business it was to herald each act with a flourishing roulade. The people were kept clear of the stage for a space of some three yards or so, roundabout, by stakes of wood set at intervals and connected together by ropes. The trumpets' bray being now heard, all pressed forward to get a good sight, and then the hum of the crowd was soon hushed and turned into silence, as the curtains were drawn from the front, and the actors dis-

covered posed for their parts, each being suitably vested.

The play was carried on in a rhythmical dialogue, representing the miraculous appearance of Christ to SS. Peter, James, John and Thomas, the actors alternately saying a verse. While it proceeded with the attendant scenic display and illusions, the hushed and superstitious people, on whose ignorant minds the performance produced a deep impression, watched every action, and drank in every utterance of the actors, as they recited in the quaint words of the Scriveners that familiar history.

When the last line was spoken, Lively went quickly to the back of the stage, and drawing aside a curtain disclosed the priest robed in the canonicals of Rome, whom he took by the hand and led to the front, the other actors grouping behind them. Then, before the spectators had time to

recover of their awe, Sykes addressed them :—

"Good friends, ye have just heard, as once before were spoke, the words of power deputed to the priests of God—the power to bind and loose men's sins on earth. Take then a pattern from holy Thomas, who, first an unbeliever, yielded him a willing servant to his God. So if ye give a due obedience to His true servants, shall ye be loosed from your grievous sins. Are not these Protestants, now-a-days, but as the Jews of old, concerning whom ye heard just anow, Peter, James, and John, lament the woe they wrought them, even to driving them forth out of their very birthland? Thus is it with us, the poor priests of God, homeless and churchless are we; chased and hunted, even as wild beasts. Men of Norfolk!—ye, whose sires ever loved their fathers' faith, and true as steel clove to

Holy Church, which hath now been so long oppressed, since mighty Wolsey's fall, by these sour-faced Reformers—will ye longer, barren-spirited, abrook their yoke, mere beasts of soil, and still be drove by them? What! when yourselves have seen our Ladye's Sacred Image dishonoured, and torn from out its very shrine, before the altar in yon Abbey Church; and have heard that sainted Beckett's bones have been rudely dragged from their last abiding-place. What! when ye see your faithful Priests ousted, to make room for these new preachers; and when ye know our Nuns, pure brides of Heaven, are turned adrift, to shift as best they may in this sin-steeped land. While, mark ye, even these your cherished games, and Mayday sports are doomed; for are they not now denounced as vain superstitions, savouring of Rome, by all these Reformers? Nay, nay, I know

ye better, Norfolk men; and so I bid ye rouse from your sleep; and now, on this her very festal day, araise our Ladye's banner, and strike a blow for her honour. Methinks, ye Norfolk men dare do all the Kentish men have done."

The speaker's words took magic effect on the crowd, as oil poured on flame, and hums of assent arose on all sides, for they were wrought up by the play; and, as the Priest had foreseen, their passions, excited by the strong liquor freely imbibed, began to usurp the place of joviality, and frolicsome merriment.

Just now, however, as the Priest's ill luck would have it, there occured an incident which seemed likely to divert the attention of the assemblage, now quite ready for mischief, to another quarter. A great commotion was visible on the outskirts of the throng, and all began to rush towards

the spot, where the riot was, leaving the orator with but so poor a hearing, that, disheartened, he was forced to cease awhile. There, De Burgh, with a small knot of gallants, who had been lounging astrut, and amusing themselves by attracting the notice of the rustic damsels, was standing near to the group of May revellers, and from time to time casting glances at Maid Marian, which presently caused the shy May-queen to exhibit signs of confusion; till, at length, incited by the jeers of his companions, he waxed yet bolder, and approaching said:—

"Fair sweetheart, I pr'thee, give me but one sprig of Mayblossom to keep me mindful of thy kind grace. Surely the Queen will grant so slight a boon to her most devoted subject."

The timid girl was turning away from the forward gallant, when, reaching for-

ward, he snatched a posey from her hand, saying,—

"Nay then, sweet one, an thou wilt not compassionate me, I must e'en help myself!"

Will Dickson, fired with indignation at his daring, and, moreover, egged on by others, some of whom called out, "sowle him, Will, sowle him," felt it only due to his queen to assert his dignity as Lord of May; so, without more ado, he seized De Burgh by his right ear, and gave the amorous gallant a sharp tweak, crying,—

"Take that for thy pains, softling, and learn that the Lord of May can protect his Queen from any such a Jackanapes as you."

For a moment, De Burgh, wincing under the pain and disgrace openly put on him, stood overcome with confusion; then, his face all aflame with rage, exclaimed,—

"What! baseborn swinker, darest thou lay hands on me?" and rushed at Will, attempting to draw his word, with the evident intention of taking prompt vengeance. This, however the press of the crowd prevented him from doing; and also closed in on his companions, who were moving forward to his assistance.

Just then Robert Ket's stentorian voice was heard above the clamour,—

"Friends, will ye abrook to see your sweethearts thus served? Marry, it seemeth your May-queen, on her crowning-day, can not be freed of these pestering gallants! Seize him, lads, and let's give the smart popinjay such a wholesome lesson, as he'll not forget in a hurry."

In response to his shout, the excited prentices and rustics rushed on the little band, and, despite their struggles, soon overpowered them. Then the Lord of May

spoke up; "What say ye, comrades, how shall we serve this smerky youth?"

In answer, a woman's shrill voice called out, "Duck him! my masters, duck him! to the pond with him!"

"Marry, yes, to the pond with him!" bawled out Ket; and his cry was quickly caught up, and repeated from mouth to mouth, as the unfortunate De Burgh, struggling desperately, was dragged by the angry yokels from his hustled friends who, already much mauled, availed themselves of the diversion and beat a speedy retreat to avoid a similar fate towards a dirty duck pond, into which, by means of an open ditch, the refuse and filth of sundry cottages near were conveyed. There, amid the boisterous and hearty jeers of the delighted lookers on, the amorous gallant was soused, and soused, and soused again; till, half suffocated and besmirched with

dirt, he was permitted to crawl out, and in his draggled finery, diffusing a most unsavoury smell, left to find his way to his friends as best he could, the crowd dividing to let him pass, and greeting him with many a sneer and sally.

"Now, by the mass!" said Flowerdew, who, with some of those whom we have seen in the parlour of the Falcon, had been standing among the crowd, waiting for the signal from the priest, and had watched this miscarriage of their scheme with much disgust, "I'd say that De Burgh was properly served for a marplot, an it were not for yon asshead tanner's cackling. 'Tis but a week, come to-morrow, that his fellows trapped as fine a buck as ever trod Hethersett bracken, and left poor Dick Bold half dead, when he with some other of my varlets fell on them. Marry! I'd quick have him afore a swainmote, only none can

swear it clear upon him. 'Twere indeed a shame he should get off scot-free, who while he raileth at his betters, hath taken care to enrich himself during the Church's weakness, and now is possessed of more than one fat manor. Perchance, however, we may yet turn the tables on him. Look ye, Will Summers, my bawcock," continued he, turning to one of those standing by, "I know that thou are ready for any dare-devil trick, if it will but fill thy scanty pouch. See you where yon roan cow pastureth afield?—'Twas of old the good Prior's glebe, and is now this fellow Ket's recent gain—dost note how trim he hath made his fencing with quickset hedging? 'Twere worth the trial, to tempt those hallooing varlets to throw his fences all adown; and, having turned the laugh against him, we'll upraise the cry of Church. Come, here be five broad pieces; go, try

them, trust me they'll not refuse; and if thou dost succeed, five more I'll add for thine own pay."

"Will's your man, Sir," cried Summers, "for this, or any other job, where ready wit can buy ready cash," and, taking the coins, he started on the errand, in which his persuasions appeared to succeed, for the crowd were seen in a twinkling to follow him, and, making for the pasture field, quickly set themselves to work the demolition of its neat fences.

Ket marked Will Summers cheering on the throng, and, knowing him for Flowerdew's dependent, had no difficulty in guessing the quarter from whence the attack proceeded; as, running up, he tried all his persuasion to induce them to desist from their work of destruction. But the spirit of mischief, which he had helped to rouse, had inflamed the rioters beyond all control,

and he was forced to look on and witness his much-prized field laid open and waste.

At last his smouldering rage burst out.

"By my soul!" swore he, "I'll have a full payment for this day's work," shaking his brawny fist in the direction where Flowerdew and his abettors were standing. Then, leaping on a wain, which stood near, the tanner boldly braved the storm, crying out in a loud voice—

"Shame on ye, neighbours, that thus work your tyrants' behest on a friend of your own degree. I'll warrant me, the brave Kentish men had not done so, else would they not have driven out from their lands these overbearing gentry, whose skins seem scarce wide enough to hold their swelling pride. Come now, I'll make a pact with ye—a goose's sauce doth serve well for the gander—I've been made your goose; marry! and I'll find ye a gander; for I swear these

proudlings shall smart, as ye have made me! Hark ye! neighbours, I'll forgive ye all this wanton trespass, if ye'll be but fair, and keep the ball a rolling, till these gentles be repaid in their own coin; ay, and with good interest."

The speaker pausing, more for lack of wind than words, the fickle mob cheered him lustily, singing out, "Hurrah for Ket! Ket for ever!" and their excited gesticulations, and the buzz of their tongues, told that the Tanner had touched a sympathetic chord. Seeing his advantage, he continued—

"Will ye not then bestir yourselves, and follow the good lead have themselves set ye? Or, are ye very cravens, coward-hearted loons? Nay then, I know ye better, you're made of as stockey stuff as them of Kent; you're of like bone and sinew to them; and now dame Fortune bids

ye kiss the hand she holds afore ye, you'll not hang back, I'll warrant—Speak up, friends, what say ye?"

Amid the hubbub and confusion, Will Dickson, carried away by excitement, jumped up on to the wain alongside Ket, and enthusiastically called out, "The Lord of May doth vote you our Captain, Master Ket, for you be just-spoken, and one of us; so, our Captain shall you be. Comrades! we'll all follow Ket." And, waving his hand, Will led the cheers, which rent the air, as the Tanner stood erect in the wain with doffed cap, the idol of the hour, till the throats of the shouters were glad of a rest; when, taking advantage of the lull, he spake up again—

"Friends all, now that ye have, by mouth of the very Lord of the revels, called me to be your Captain, and with your plaudits have approved his choice, I'll promise ye

Ket's no man to cry back, but will prove by his deeds, as he hath often done afore, that ye have not mischose a leader. Yet must ye not only shout, for any craven can do that, but each one bear a part. Hark ye! to-morrow's dawn shall prove what metal ye be cast of; for then, I call on all true Norfolk men to meet their Captain on this green; and, be sure ye come not empty handed, I'll warrant there'll be tough work in plenty to be done—'twixt now and then I've much to tend to, so I'll bid ye all good day."

With which he leaped from the cart and went off through the surging throng towards his dwelling, beckoning to some of his chosen ones to follow him; while the crowd noisily discussed the morrow's programme as they dispersed.

There were not, however, wanting those of the lookers-on who, whether converts to

the new faith or adherents of the old, had viewed these proceedings with dislike and grave distrust; as, gathered in little sets here and there, they watched the progress of the riot.

Worthy Master Jakeman, the saddler, thoughtfully journeying homewards, remarked to his companion, Master Shortreed, the goldsmith:—

"I much mislike Bob Ket's doings, neighbour; an he make good his purpose, 'twill but justly rouse the rage of all the gentles against his class; and we, peaceful traders, will be milked for his saucy pride. Besides, you well wot how these hurles are trades' death blow. Credit me, if he'd but stick to his calling, and keep his hides in pit a full year, instead of a few months, 'twould be better for him and them who buy my saddlery."

"You're right," answered Master Shortreed, who belonged to the old faith, "this Robert Ket hath, in sooth, long been a thorn in our sides; quiet going folks can scarce ever get any peace now-a-days, that he hath indoctrinated these shallow-pated churls with his nonsense. Marry! since he hath become enriched, he's more like an ass fed on beans than aught else I wot of! Reform, forsooth! let him first reform his overbearing ways, and live in conform to law, instead of spouting rank sedition!"

"Ay, ay, Master Shortreed," chimed in another, "that's true enough, Bob Ket's but a sounding pot—hollow within."

Thus, and in a like strain, did many a peaceful burgher hold forth; some taking Ket's part so far as to say that it was a shame to throw his fences down; but qualifying their sympathy by holding that

it was but a reprisal which he deserved; and so on. Meanwhile, the Bailiff and other chief burghers were considering what steps to take in order to prevent the threatened riot.

## CHAPTER IV.

"I tell thee, Jack Cade, the clothier, means to dress the Commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap upon it."

KING HENRY VI.

THE tanner, in company with his brother and a few picked followers, on leaving the green went across the Sheep Market, and turned into a narrow street, which branched out of it. Here, he opened a small wicket gate in the wall, and led the way into a good-sized garden, which, in the gathering dusk, seemed to be laid out in stiff patterns of trefoils, quatrefoils, squares and hexagons; but the fragrance of its spring flowers was overpowered by a stronger smell, arising from the adjoining tanyard, where many a hide was pickling.

The house was that of a well-to-do trader, two storied and flint built, the windows having square stone heads with chamfered edges, and substantial mullions. The front doorway was arched, and above it was worked a neat hood mould. Hanging by the side of the door was a bell chain, which Ket pulled vigorously, and his impetuous summons quickly brought to the door a serving girl. Striding in, he led the others, following him, to a long room comfortably wainscotted in oak, which opened off the entrance-hall. There, was a table ready spread with supper, and Ket took his seat at the head of the board, while his guests, boisterously talking over the day's rumpus, settled themselves down, each one getting the best place he could. At the lower end sat his prentices and menials. All fell to with appetites, which did not appear to have

been blunted by the day's events, for the good cheer disappeared from the trenchers with wonderful rapidity. Plenty of malt liquor, too, was swilled to help the meat down.

In due course all were satisfied; and then the host stood up, beckoning for silence, and said,—

"I give ye welcome, friends, a hearty welcome, which ye will best return me by drinking a cup to Reformation, and confusion to the lordlings, who would make free sport with your maidens, and to the gentles, who would despoil us of the earnings of our sweat—Here's to Reformation!"

With which, he tossed off a bumper, and the others followed suit with noisy assent.

Flagon succeeded flagon; and their threats and valourous vaunts waxed louder and louder.

We must now, however, leave them to

their revelry, and the concoction of plans for the more serious business of the morrow, to which they were pledged; and look in at another party, gathered in the parlour of the Falcon Tavern.

Here were disposed about the room those whom we met there in the morning; and, amongst them reclining on a sort of couch—having changed his damaged smart garments for a suit of Host Stubb's coarse spun, which hung loosely about his slender person—lay De Burgh, who had received so severe a mauling from the mob. He was pale, except a dark red mark round his right ear, which showed where the Lord of May's brawny hand had inflicted punishment. Altogether he presented a picture calculated to move to pity even those who would reprehend his frivolous behaviour; for, after all, he was but a youth. Yet, to judge from the sour looks cast on him by the rest,

ere this night's moon doth wane, I must ride for Thorpe, where fair Mistress Haselwode awaiteth in anxiety the result of our effort. I do not, however, despair but that we may yet work out our ends in some other fashion—when the train be laid, ye shall have timely warning—till then, farewell!"

After the priest, others of the party slipped off, one by one, till none were left save Flowerdew, De Burgh, and Lively; and the former, whose kindly blue eyes showed sympathy for the unfortunate noble, said;

"Come, Lord Hubert, cheer up! What, if the good priest hath been somewhat hard upon us? Surely 'tis to be excused, for he did regard thee as the prime cause of the mishap; and, i' faith, was after disinclined to credit my poor wit with bare justice. What's done is past mending; we must

console us with the hope of better luck next time."

"Marry! Flowerdew, I'd forgive the anger which his wasted oratory maybe warranted; but, I protest, 'twas not fair to make me scape-goat for both sides, I did but move towards a wench, and thou didst but repay a tiny sum of the long score owed to this Tanner. I could not tell the churls would take me so amiss, and you scarce could have dreamt that bold-faced brawler would so quick have enchained them; but fret not, my back's broad enough to bear this wrathful priest's scoldings. Methinks, good friend, we must not longer sojourn here, so I make bold to claim thine hospitality. Faugh! how the stink of that foul duck pond sticketh to one, I'd be glad of a sweet water bath."

"My poor house at Hethersett is at thy service, De Burgh," replied Flowerdew,

tiled roofs were relieved in places by small dormers, and big chimney stacks, built lozenge wise, with many a projecting angle, reared themselves gaunt against the sky line, casting deep shadows aslant them. The rear of the quadrangle was occupied by the stabling and out-buildings; whither they rode straight and dismounted.

Flowerdew, consigning Will Lively to the care of one of his attendants with orders to see him snugly housed and victualled, conducted his guest across the courtyard into the house, which was wrapped in quiet, the inmates being all abed, except Jenny Truelove, the housekeeper, who, roused from a nap, came out of her parlour, candle in hand, and received the Master with a respectful curtsey. Flowerdew bade her promptly prepare a guest chamber for his companion, and, while she bustled about to perform his order, the pair paid due

attention to their creature comforts. By when they had finished this agreeable task the bedchamber was ready, to which Flowerdew ushered his guest; and, giving him good night, himself retired to seek the repose which would be found especially grateful after the excitement of the day.

The sun was up and shining bright through his window in the morning before De Burgh rose from his comfortable bed; and, when he descended to the breakfast parlour, he found his host with Lively and several servants, their morning meal being despatched, busily engaged furbishing up weapons, of which there was an abundant supply, of one sort and another, about the house.

"Give thee good day, my lord," exclaimed Master Flowerdew, as he entered, "I scarce need ask how you fare after yesterday's racket, for, unless your looks

ham church could be seen in the clear morning light. Surely such a scene ought rather to raise pure inspirations in the minds of the two loungers, than be the chosen spot for unlicensed plotting! At first they walked in silence, each shy at approaching the subject of his thoughts. Presently De Burgh broke the ice.

"Marry! good Lively, I know not how it is, but that rosy May-queen's coyness hath raised within me such a flutter, that I scarce can bethink me of aught else. 'Twould be a sad shame if so much rustic loveliness were owned by that malapert churl, on whom I propose to revenge me."

"Of a verity, your worship," replied Will, "'tis a poor barndoor cock that will not crow on his own dunghill. He hath had his crow; ay, and struck thee with his spurs; and I can devise no neater recompense than to lure his mate to the game-

bird's yard—I'll wager he'll not show fight, and she'll plume her feathers in her pride."

"By the mass! Will, I avow your ready wit hath hit the right nail o' the head. An I can get speech with the maid, I'll quick try and cozen her of a kiss; but if she be coy, then shall the May-queen learn that De Burgh brooks not baulking."

Thus, screened by the yew hedges, the pair walked up and down the shady walks, weaving a web in which to catch pretty Peggy.

## CHAPTER V.

"I see them! I see them! There's Best's son, the tanner of Wingham;

* * * * * * *

And Dick the butcher;

* * * * * * *

And Smith the weaver.

KING HENRY VI.

IT was the hour appointed for the rendezvous on the Green, which yesterday was the scene of the May-play with its attendant turbulence, and the rioters were coming together, by twos and threes, from their various quarters. All were of the lower grades of life. Conspicuous among them were some of those who had been hired in the cause of the Church, and now seized on the opportunity afforded them by Ket to

transfer their allegiance, reckoning on free and uncontrolled license.

Here came a fellow, whose ugly visage was stamped with those

> "Two things, which a drunkard doth disclose,
> A crimsoned phiz and a pimpled nose,"

ready for any sword law, looking asquint, and swaggering along, his rapier clanking with every stride, and a pistol peeping forth from his rusty doublet—Joe Box by name—who had earned for himself a questionable reputation; many a helpless traveller having yielded up to him his purse—ay, and it was said his life, too, else, why the letter M branded deep on his left thumb?

Along with him walked his boon companion, Peter Giles, also a spongy fellow, twirling at his moustache, and carrying his highly coloured nose loftily in the air. Many another loose-looking fish, with well-

known swilpots and idle ne'er-do-wells, there was, too, who preferred any hurle to working for honest bread, mixed up with stray peasants and yokels. These were mostly armed only with sticks and cudgels, although some few carried scythe blades fastened to poles, yet, wielded by the stout limbed rustics, would the sticks and cudgels be found pretty dangerous weapons in a hand-to-hand combat. The prentice class, too, was represented; for these were, as of yore, ever ready for any devilment; and those from a distance, freed from restraint, were only too eager to seize on any pretext for further excitement; they, as the rustics, were armed only with hedge stakes, and scratch weapons. Flitting about amongst them all were to be seen women earnestly endeavouring to dissuade their husbands or sweethearts from embarking further in the enterprise; but, to all the persuasive

entreaties, and even sharp scoldings of their good angels, they turned but deaf ears, for the frenzy of passion, and the prospect of gain had taken deep root in their ignorant minds. Then the force of example swayed others, as like a rolling snowball their numbers swelled.

They had not long to await their leader, for he presently came, armed with pike and pistol, marshalling a compact band, all equipped with halberts, bills, or javelins. With him were his brother and the Lord of May, who flourished a hastily-made banner, on which were blazoned the words —"Ket and Reformation." As they approached, those assembled shouted—"Hurrah for Ket! Ket for ever!" and otherwise demonstrated by the force of lungs their approval of his proceedings, little dreaming how great a tyrant they were about to set up.

Ket soon shewed he was not wanting in one quality of a good captain, for he promptly set to work ranging his recruits in some kind of order, and it was astonishing how his domineering manner had its due effect on the rabble, who obediently fell into rank, and stood four abreast instead of in a confused mass. Then Ket, putting himself in the centre, was preparing to address them, when there came bustling up a small company of the town watch, headed by the High Bailiff, Master Busswell, the mercer, who was accompanied by Masters Jakeman and Shortreed, and other of the leading burghers of Windham. With them also walked Parson Whitehead, carrying a Bible in his hand, as a symbol of his profession. The civic train approached with some fuss; and in a tone, which betrayed a conscious sense of his dignity as Bailiff, worshipful Master

Busswell thus addressed his fellow burgher :—

"Wherefore, neighbour, is this unseemly concourse? and why, these armed men? I fear much it be for no good thing ye be all gathered here, so, as becomes my office, I command you, Master Robert Ket, forthwith to yield yourself, and I do promise you shall not be more hardly dealt with than your procedure doth warrant. All ye others, I order to disperse to your dwellings, and remain peaceful subjects of the king."

"Methinks thou'rt out of breath to no purpose, Master Bailiff," returned Ket to the astonished magistrates.

"For shame, Robert Ket, to answer up the Bailiff so!" exclaimed Parson Whitehead, "nay, then do I charge thee, by the duty which thou owest to thine ordained instructor, refrain, while now there be time,

from further violation of the law. Know that these, thy fellow burghers, be firmly and rightly moved to uphold it; and as in bygone times thou hast been a good servant of the Protestant Reformation—receiving a full reward for your service, I trow—I now beseech thee by the reverence due to this Holy Bible, which thou professest to honour—ay, and did keep a copy writ by Master Tyndall to thy peril, when proud Gardiner decreed its burning, or else a forfeit of goods and life—yield a loyal obedience to them, who by God's will he set in authority; as thou wilt have learned, if thou hast read that sacred book aright. Then will we, after the due acknowledgment of thine error, receive thee back to the fold, and try persuade them to overget this backsliding."

"Gramercy! Parson Whitehead," replied Ket, "thou takest too much on thyself,

that presumest to lecture me. Dost think that I am to be turned from my bent by thy scolding? Nay, rather, know that I will have none of thy blather, but will pursue my purpose even to the triumphant issue, which awaiteth me. Why should I, forsooth, bow to thee, who some few years agone thyself sold Whitsun ales in Wicklewood churchyard for thine own profit?"

"Then go thy way, saucy man," cried the indignant parson, "and with these poor, misguided fools seek the fate which all godless law breakers surely find."

"Ah! ah!" laughed Ket, "why Master Whitehead, thou'rt as two-faced as the crystal vial of Hales. Now thou cryest up the Church's power; afore none, more loudly than thou, did decry Wolsey and his Pope, and side with Harry, because it so suited thee to get free of them. Thou didst but rob Peter to pay Paul, and now,

belike, thou fearest to get some present loss. Go to, parson, thou'lt get thy tithe pig!"

"Paternoster, hark! how he bewraileth us," exclaimed Whitehead, in a hot fury, "surely the devil hath him fast, as presently will the catch-poll."

"Peace, canter," returned Ket rudely; but his speech was cut short by Master Busswell, whose patience was clean exhausted.

"I'll abear no longer with this paltering —Watch, seize your prisoner."

In obedience to the Bailiff's command, Sergeant Jimes advanced, and placed his hand on the tanner's shoulder, saying,—

"Master Ket, I arrest you in the name of the King."

For reply, Ket briskly struck Jimes's halbert from his hand, and left the sergeant disarmed.

"Now, by my soul! this is past all bearing," shouted the Bailiff, "thus to beard us—Guards! advance, and on your lives secure this audacious brawler, who shall answer for his daring afore the justices."

Thus urged on the posse made a rush at Ket, who called on his followers, and they quickly ran to second him, crying out,—"a Ket, a Ket."

It was but a short struggle, for the civic guards were soon beaten down and mauled, and began to cry mercy lustily; so that the discomfited Bailiff with his constables was glad to beat a retreat, more rapid than dignified.

Ket distributed the arms, which they were deprived of, among the rioters, and stayed the more impetuous of them, who, having tasted the fray, would have liked to pursue their retreating worships, and

wreak some vengeance on them for old scores' account.

"Thus then, my fellows, I promise ye, we'll serve all the bloated offspring of power, whether they be of high degree, or but of middle rank, an they yield not our demands. But now, let's on for Hethersett, where Master Flowerdew awaits us."

With which, Ket, placing himself at their head, marched off eager for revenge on his old opponent.

As they went the rioters passed the little hamlet of Downham, where stood yeoman Goodeve's farm house. In front of it lay a pleasant garden filled with flowers, pot-herbs and vegetables, with a fair sprinkling of apple trees and gooseberry bushes. A well-stocked foldyard, and a herd of milch cows browsing on the yellow pastures round the house, with the contented grunt-

ing of swine, and cackling of hens, told that the farmer was prosperously off.

Several little cots for his peasantry were nestled alongside the road, which was near to the homestead.

The farmer, with his wife and daughter, watched them pass from the large bayed window of the spacious kitchen; which, well hung with stores of bacon, bunches of sweet herbs—both for medicinal purposes and for strewing the chambers—looked, with its clean sanded floor, homelike and cozy. In one corner stood the distaff, where from home-grown flax the women spun their household linen a nights, while the master busied himself in fashioning gear and yokes for his oxen team. On a dresser lay wooden trenchers with spoons for the pottage; and pewter dishes and mugs shone brightly ranged along the wall.

Peggy, now looking a sweeter and fairer

daughter of England, in her work-a-day dress, than even in her gay May-day finery, stopped awhile the performance of her domestic duties to gaze with astonishment on the long line of Ket's men.

"I tell thee what, wife," exclaimed Goodeve, "I much mistrust this Master Ket of Windham. I fear he hath beguiled our Will Dickson into his ways, for I'll swear I've just seen him go along walking nigh to Ket. Ah! naught but evil can befall him, if he follow such a lead."

"But thou'lt surely say, father," said Peggy, "that Will's a brave lad, and an honest, who will not let his sweetheart be put on by any."

"In sooth, wench, I'll own the gallant was properly served by Will; ay, and pluckily too, which deed all just men will deem fair; but with yon riotous wastrils, who seek to live without labour, and to eat

without sweat the bread of ease, I hold not one whit. May be, 'tis the tanner's ale hath turned poor Will's brain for him thus to join hands with one who sets our good laws at scorn. Marry! if he mend not his ways, you and he shall soon part, Peggy."

"You're right, John," said dame Margery, "why, I could scarce trust mine own eyes when I saw the folks pass by the paddock, and Will with them a marching along. Ah, me! he's but a sad fool to lend himself to work that troublous burgher's ends."

"It were better far," answered Goodeve, "he minded his plough and got the leasows seeded, else, I'll warrant, there'll be never a bite for his muttons come winter time."

"Pr'ythee, father," said Peggy, into whose blue eyes the tears were welling, "be thou not so harsh towards him."

"Tut, tut, wench, thou'rt but as very a

daff as Will; an thou thinkest he will advantage him in this matter. I tell thee this riot will but land him in Norwich jail. What! dost think Master Flowerdew and his sort will abrook this Ket's sauce, which hath of late been more and more provoking? Nay, I know our gentles better; ay, and am with them hand and glove in this quarrel. I bid thee tell this Will of thine that my wench shall never pair with a skimble scamble fellow, who follows in the tail of yon spouting burgher, and flouts his betters while his sull stands still. A young man should be modest."

The honest farmer spoke with much energy and warmth, but failed to convince Peggy, who answered him—

"Nay but, father, bethink thee that on last St. Valentine's, when the birds do choose their mates, how I looked out a-doors, and the first soul I met was Will a

singing as he went to plough. Thou well wottest, that so 'twas willed by Heaven, for him and me ever after to keep true."

This was a skilful move of Peggy's, for it brought her mother round to her side.

"Come, goodman, you must own Will's a lad of spirit; may be when this fit be past he will return a wiser man, sobered down to work; so be not too hard on him. Now, Peggy girl, hie thee to the churning, the butter must be got for to-morrow's market. Let's hope no further plague will come of it."

"I tell thee, dame, that as he breweth, so must he drink," was the parting shot fired by Goodeve, as Peggy retired pouting to the dairy, shewing for the first time symptoms of resistance to the paternal control.

Then the farmer went forth to his lands,

where the oxen were lazily drawing the plough over his top furlong piece.

The neglect of this duty on Will Dickson's part had seemingly added to his wrath, for he muttered grumblingly to himself as he went along—

"To lose such a day for sull as this—I'd stake my best cow, Poppet, against a sucking calf he'll come to a bad ending. No, no, I'll trust my wench to none such as he."

## CHAPTER VI.

"Take thy lute, wench; my soul grows sad with troubles;
Sing, and disperse them, if thou canst—leave working."
KING HENRY VIII.

A YOUNG girl sat in an oak-panelled parlour of Thorpe Hall. The room was furnished with comfort, the floor having a carpet of sweet dry rushes. On the hearth was a firepan, with hand-irons, fire-fork, and tongs, ranged on either side of it. Over the carved chimney-place hung a burnished steel mirror, bordered with yellow velvet. The table was inlaid with a pattern of polished cypress and fir woods; on it stood an ebony standish with silver mountings for ink, and for dust to dry the writing. Before the

windows and door were hangings of arras, worked by some industrious ancestress long since gone to rest. The panels on the walls were relieved by portraits of knights and their dames, to some of whom the girl's features had a strong likeness.

As she sat in a quaint, high-backed chair, her deft fingers were busily engaged embroidering a Scriptural scene on coarse canvas with threads of many-coloured silks, the skeins of which hung round her neck—an apparently interminable task, but one prevalent with ladies then-a-days.

At her feet lay a handsome hound, which looked up now and again into its mistress's face with the anxious gaze of an attached follower, as though detecting in her mien some sorrow or trouble.

By the window another girl was seated on a low stool diligently reading; apparently

half companion, half attendant. She was a pleasant, blue-eyed, maiden of altogether a bolder type of beauty; for her hands were larger made, her figure plumper, and her cheeks browner than those of her fair mistress, whose complexion was clear and pale, and features delicately cast, while her eyes were dark and lustrous.

The dying rays of the evening sun, falling slantwise through the narrow window, showed that the lady boasted good blood, and rare beauty, two of fortune's gifts, which have ever been rightly prized.

The richness of her dress helped to set off her person to advantage. A gown of flowered damask, cut square at the neck and left open to the waist, disclosed the kirtle of plainer stuff beneath. The sleeves were puffed, and pinched with rich broidery work, and a fair, white lawn partlet, knit with Venice gold, covered her neck. Her hair

was mostly hidden beneath a caul of black velvet, from which had however escaped a a raven tress, which fell naturally on her shoulder.

The companion was neatly dressed in a petticoat of murrey coloured stuff, with a white kercher over her head, and linen sleeves confined at the wrist by a silk band. She also wore a large snowy linen apron.

Such then, were Mistress Catherine Haselwode, the orphan daughter of Sir Denys Haselwode—reckoned the fairest, as well as the greatest heiress in those parts —and her companion, Dorothy Luttrell, whose father, a bold rebel captain, had met his fate in the Pilgrimage of Grace, leaving Dorothy portionless to the bounty of his patron, Sir Denys, who did not long survive his follower.

Being fervently attached to the unreformed Church, the Mistress of Thorpe, as

her father had also been, was in high disfavour with the dominant party.

From the days of young Flowerdew's manhood Catherine Haselwode had been betrothed to him, and the time fixed for their nuptials was now not far distant.

Presently, the lady with a weary sigh laid aside her work, and addressed her companion :—

"In sooth, Dorothy, my heart is well nigh sickened, as I think on these troublous times; when rude and ignorant men tear adown our holy shrines, and trample under foot our precious relics. Ay, and drive the saintly sisters forth from their retreats to fare as they may. Alack! since the great Cardinal's fall, these evils have come on apace."

"And yet, dear Mistress," replied Dorothy, "there be still among us some

brave hearts, who shrink not from venturing them in Heaven's own cause—'Tis surely time the good father's messenger were here with news, since he promised thee speedy word how he prospered at Windham, and he seemed in mighty great spirits about it, too."

"Welaway!" said Catherine, "I fear me some mischance hath fallen out, else had he been here. Dorothy, I've daily waited some great sorrow, since last Christmas Eve, when the yule log—and, thou mayest remember, 'twas a mighty large one, burnt but part the night, and afore morning clean went out. 'Twas an augur of ill to our house. Ah! little did I think, when 'twas drawn in by the gay company, with my Lord of Misrule sitting atop, and we clapped our hands and cried with very laughter at their antics, that it presaged a mournful face on

the morrow—Go now, fetch me my virginal and pricksong, I'll try banish these sad thoughts awhile."

Dorothy, rising at her mistress's bidding, brought the virginal; and Catherine, touching the strings, soon filled the room with tuneful melody, for, as she played and sang, the fair musician seemed to pour all her soul into the work, and, forgetting her painful musings, to kindle in her bosom more enlivening emotions.

The pastime was interrupted by the entrance of a serving man, on whose doublet sleeve was woven the Haselwode badge—a sprig of hazel. He announced the arrival of one, craving instant speech; and was closely followed by him, whom Catherine at once knew for the priest, in spite of the long cloak and muffler, which hid his figure and features. She could

hardly wait until the servant had retired, ere she began to question him how his errand had sped.

"Alas! daughter," replied he, whom we have seen the guiding spirit of the May-plot, "I am but the messenger of our failure. 'Tis a long tale to tell chapter and verse, but I'll try and give the kernel of it. Listen—Hubert de Burgh, by wanton folly, caused our discomfiture on the threshold of success; when he must needs go try some lovepasses with the May Queen, afore the very eyes of her lord. Then up got Ket, the Windham Tanner, and spirited the folks, who took a vengeance on the gay youth, which he'll not quick forget. 'Twas then, Master Flowerdew tried to retrieve us, hoping to get the advantage of his old foe; but the churls were led captive by the vapourings of the Tanner, and elected to follow him in a raid against their betters,

rather than to adventure them for the Church of God."

"Thine is in sooth poor news, father," answered Catherine. "'Tis strange, I was but just telling Dorothy how methought a fit of sadness boded some evil chance—this is a proof that coming sorrow doth cast its shade before it."

"Be not downcast, daughter," said Sykes, "but let us meet trouble with a bold face. Pr'ythee now, let me advise thee; it would be well to take time by the forelock, and call together the varlets of thy manor; none can tell to what deeds these fever-heated Ket's men may pass, so 'tis best to be ready."

"What! thinkest then these churls will dare pit them against us? By our Ladye!" exclaimed Catherine, with flashing eye, "they shall meet with a wholesome welcome! I'll see to this forthwith, and speak

to Captain Daffrow; so farewell awhile, father, you will find the hiding chamber ready prepared.—Come, Dorothy."

Leaving the parlour, Mistress Haselwode and her companion turned along a broad corridor, off which were built the principal sleeping chambers of the Hall, and descending the wide oaken stairs, the balustrade of which was richly, though grotesquely, carved, entered the great hall. This was a long and lofty, yet somewhat narrow, apartment, lighted on one side only by a row of tall mullioned windows, the pointed heads of which were arched after the depressed style of Henry the Seventh's time, when Catherine's grandsire, Sir Giles Haselwode, had made alterations to his house. These windows were filled in with small quarries, except at the heads, where each mullioned space terminated in a cusped trefoil, in the centre of which

were painted on the glass the armorial bearings of the Haselwodes, each one varied by the quartering of some family alliance. The bare stone walls were hung all round with helmets, corslets, casques, javelins, arquebuses, axes, and other weapons, sufficient to arm a moderate force. Down in the vaults beneath, too, there was no lack of powder. The ceiling was of oak, sub-divided into many lozenge-shaped panels, in the centre of each of which was displayed the Tudor rose, or some device of bird or animal. At either end of the hall doors opened, leading to the several parts of the house.

Here they found Captain Daffrow, whose titular captaincy had been acquired by his service in the Pilgrimage of Grace, where he led a troop—wearing on his sleeve the emblem of the five wounds, and following the banner of the picture of Christ—and

had been granted to him by the rebel leader, in recognition of his valour, prior to the collapse of the cause.

Daffrow was a weather-stained, broad-chested, stalwart soldier, past fifty; on whom hard living, adventure, and exposure to all weathers, had only had the effect of ironing his muscles, and greying his beard.

When Mistress Haselwode entered, the soldier, who was busily engaged in polishing the barrel of an arquebus, which he had just reached down from the wall, rose, and clumsily performed his obeisance, while he cast on Dorothy a look, which would lead one to suppose that lively maid had been practising her art of captivation on the man of war, and that some love passes had gone between them, for she blushed slightly at his covert attention. Catherine observing them, jestingly remarked—

"'Tis said, Dorothy, that an amorous old man is like a winter flower; but, methinks, good Daffrow is younger at heart than his frosted beard would warrant."

She quickly relapsed, however, into her former mood, as she told the Captain in a few words the news brought by Sykes, and bade him take prompt action to make a sure defence, if needs were.

"Fear not, mistress," replied Daffrow, briskly, "but I will acquit me of thy trust to the best of my power; I love the game too well. By the mass! if they show their faces here, they shall find it a tough job to get in. I'll forthwith send your command, and call the men together, and betake me to the gates to see how a careful disposition can best be made."

With which, the Captain departed in zealous haste to perform his lady's orders, and was soon occupied in the congenial task

of summoning the retainers, distributing arms, and assigning their various posts; and great was the bustle all over the hall.

"Dorothy," said Mistress Haselwode, as they returned to her parlour, "I cannot rid me of this melancholy fit; even now I am troubled lest mischief befall the reverend prior. My thoughts persist in dwelling on the doleful sight I once witnessed with my loved father. 'Twas on the 22nd day of May, some seven years gone, when I was yet a girl, that Sir Denys took me along with him on a journey to London, whither he went on some secret errand. There we lodged in Cheap the night, and on the morrow, bidding me get on my hood, he led me by the hand to a part called Smithfelde. Here I saw gathered a large crowd of folk, and there were set up three scaffolds, on one of which was seated, in all the civic state, my Lord Mayor with their worships the Alder-

men; and, on either side, my Lord Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk. Before them, on a second, was standing some one making a preachment. On the third stood another whom I remembered having heard awhile before saying mass, and preaching at Paul's Cross, counselling all men not to yield the King supreme over Holy Church. My father whispered me, 'twas Doctor Forrest, of the Grey Friars, of Greenwich. By him was set a picture, sent from Wales, called "Darvell Gatheren," and by it a gallows tree. Beneath the tree was writ, in big letters,—

"David Darvell Gatheren,
As saith the Welshmen,
Fetched outlaws out of hell.
Now he is come, with spere and shilde,
In harnes to burn in Smithfelde,
For in Wales he may not dwell.
And Forest the frier,
That obstinate lyer,
That wilfully shall be dead,
In his contumacie,
The Gospell doth deny,
The king to be supreme head."

And, oh! Dorothy, many a one had full faith in the holy image, as the doggrel shewed. But when the Preacher had ended his saying, methought all sense would leave my body, so numbed with fright was I. Lo! some seized the pious friar, and had him to the gallows, hanged alive by the middle with chains, and burned with the picture. Welaway! the memory of that dread sight is again in mine eyes, and I do so tremble lest our good prior should fall into such bloodthirsty hands; for if he did, he would surely meet a short shrive and quick reckoning for his deeds at Windham. Wherefore, it behoveth us to see with care that none—save only trusty Ralph, who brought him in by the postern door—learn the secret of his abiding-place, or that such an one be with us."

"'Tis, in sooth, a doleful tale, dear Mis-

tress," said Dorothy; "yet be comforted, I hear that Master Cranmer hath set his face against all such bloody deeds, and he hath sway with the King. We'll keep Father Sykes hid away in the secret chamber, where, I trow, none will dream of him. Methinks, though, he will now be hankering after supper, for he hath a marvellous fine appetite, and loveth not to be kept a waiting."

"In sooth, we must not forget his supper," said Mistress Haselwode, as taking up a basket, she proceeded to fill it with wine and food from the table, which was laid with a light refection for rere supper. She then opened a small closet door, formed in the panelling at one corner of the room, and touched some concealed spring, when the back of the closet itself shot back, and revealed a narrow passage, into which she went, carefully closing the door

behind her. Guiding herself by the walls down the windings of the passage, which was dark as pitch, and barely two feet wide, she came presently to a small chamber, so low that a tall man could hardly stand upright, and lighted by a mere slit in the walls, out of the massive thickness of which it was contrived. Here sat the late Prior of Bromeholme, having divested himself of his disguise. Father Michael Sykes had, but a few years back, held great power in these parts; for his Priory had waxed fat with the accumulated offerings of many a pious donor. This had been one of the earliest confiscated by the King, and now its broad acres and beeves were distributed among other owners, and the Prior, with his monks, scattered abroad. He was not alone a sufferer; Bishops Gardiner and Bonner, and others of the Romish persuasion, lay in prison; while

Cranmer, great with the King, seemed disposed to uphold and support the Reformers.

Michael Sykes had passed the time since his deposition in busily scheming, with other kindred spirits, to forward the agitation, now being fiercely carried on in various parts of the country, for a restoration of his Church to power.

He was sitting buried in thought, and, so absorbed, that the entrance of Mistress Haselwode was unnoticed by him, till she spoke, and told him of the defensive preparations going on in the Hall, when he roused himself from his reverie, and answered her:—

"Ah! Mistress Catherine, would that there were but a few score more of hearts true as thy departed sire's in this degenerate land, and I should not despair of speedily prevailing against the strength of these heretical usurpers! I've been a think-

## CHAPTER VII.

"And you, that love the commons, follow me—
Now show yourselves men ; 'tis for liberty.
We will not leave one lord, one gentleman,—
Spare none, but such as go in clouted shoon."

KING HENRY VI.

WHEN Ket and his followers reached Hethersett, they found Master Flowerdew's gates locked. This was, however, no effectual hinderance to them. At a sign from their leader, the rioters commenced tearing up the paling, which fenced off the park from the roadway, for a considerable circuit on each side of the gates; and very soon many a perch of it was levelled to the ground. The work of destruction was at its height, when Flowerdew, with whom rode De

Burgh, came rapidly up to the spot, accompanied by such servants and retainers as he had been able to get together. Astonished at the great number of his opponents, and the determination expressed by their acts, he tried them with soft words, but without avail, for Ket set up a loud jeer.

"Aha! dost think to turn us by sugary speech? I'd ha' credited thee with more brains. Begone! else we'll souse thee in thine own mere, as we did yon dainty duckling. Comrades! mind him not, he'll but bamfoozle ye, let us to work." And seizing hold on one of the posts, he wrenched it up, when a length of the paling fell with a loud crash.

"Take that for thy pains," cried Flowerdew, in a hot passion as, drawing a pistol from his belt, he took an aim at Ket; but somehow the bullet missed its billet,

where they would be best able to repel any attack.

Their preparations were scarce completed before Ket and his people came in sight, and proceeded to spread themselves round the house.

Ket directed the operations not unskilfully, for he first made his men keep under cover of the trees round about, while he carefully surveyed the place on all sides. Then he told off a detachment to a wood-pile hard by, ordering them to knock up some rough ladders, with a view to effect an entrance by the upper windows of the back, while a general attempt was made on the front.

All this while the little garrison were not idle, but fired on the besiegers from their posts within; and many a rash churl and prentice lad bit the dust. The fate of their fellows did not, however, daunt the rest,

who returned the fire whenever opportunity offered, making havoc with the window glass.

Night now drew on, and Ket determined to make his effort, hoping, by a combined attack on several sides, to get a foothold within the place.

In pursuance of this plan he divided his men into four parties, naming a lieutenant to each, and at a given signal sent them to the assault on three sides, so as to compel the defenders to draw to the defence of those quarters.

As the conflict waxed warm, Ket himself led his picked lot round to the back of the house, and, unnoticed in the din which was going on in front, stealthily reared a ladder to the upper window of a sleeping room.

The captain himself first mounted, and easily forced an entrance, and was followed by the others, one by one; when, silently